



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

AFGHANISTAN

Alternative Livelihoods Update

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STEPPING UP HELMAND PROJECTS TO SUPPORT ERADICATION

On March 7, the Government of Afghanistan launched an aggressive campaign to eradicate poppy in Helmand Province. The effort aims to curb the opium trade that threatens the stability of the country. To mitigate the negative impact of eradication efforts, USAID stepped up existing programs to support farmers in the region through the Alternative Livelihoods Programs. These programs help farmers substitute poppy with other crops.

Recognizing that viable alternatives to poppy will take time, cash for work programs help Afghans generate an immediate source of income. Such projects provide a financial safety net to farmers while improving cultivation and access to markets. A program in the southern provinces of Kandahar, Helmand and Uruzgan, employed 27,400 laborers over 1.2 million days and earned \$4.5 million in wages. Other cash for work projects include:

Marja Irrigation Drain Cleaning. Over six months, an estimated 1,000 laborers are cleaning irrigation drains in central Helmand to improve agricultural productivity. To date, irrigation-related activity from this project has provided over 47,000 hectares of land with increased access to reliable water. In another project, laborers will clean approximately 160 km of drains in central Helmand.

Road Projects. Rehabilitating the road from Girishk to Changir will increase farmers' access to markets and provide incomes to laborers. In northern Helmand, an estimated 7,300 workers will be employed for four months near the Ring Road starting in late March. Afghans working on roads are gaining technical skills.

Darweshan Irrigation Canal Repair. The repair of 22 structures to accommodate rising and lowering of water levels on the Darweshan Canal in Garmser of south-central Helmand will employ approximately 800 people. This work will begin in summer when the canal's water level decreases, and will extend water access to over 24,000 hectares of land.



PHOTO: USAID/RAMP

Engineers train Afghan laborers to build cobblestone roads. The project employs 200 laborers for three months. An additional 1,400 laborers will finish the remaining 7 km to Qalai Bost in Lakshar Gah, the commercial capital of Helmand.



Other ongoing activities include:

Helmand River Re-Channeling. Preserving the Darweshan Canal will provide a consistent water supply to 12,000 hectares downstream, where 18,000 people have been at risk for flooding and loss of irrigable land.

Spring seed program. In addition to distributing seed and fertilizer, this program provides training on production and marketing of spring vegetables to 2,097 farmers in Helmand.



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USAID's Michelle Parker breaks ground with Afghan farmers. Through the orchards program in the eastern provinces, 5,000 farmers are increasing their crop yields.

PHOTO: USAID/AFGHANISTAN

Alternative Livelihoods Program (ALP) Making Progress in Afghanistan:

- Over **6,200 km of irrigation canals** have been rehabilitated affecting **290,000 hectares** of land.
- USAID improved over **1,000 km of canals in the south resulting in better irrigation to 42,620 hectares of land in the southern region**. Irrigation is critical to produce high-value agriculture, such as grapes, which unlike poppy production does not require irrigation.
- In Nangarhar and Laghman, **3,000 hectares of commercial orchards** are being planted. Once fully developed, these orchards will produce high value fruits and nuts increasing exports and the income potential for 5,000 farmers. About 2,800 farmers received training to improve crop production in November 2005.
- In fall 2005, USAID distributed **40,000 metric tons of fertilizer** and **14,000 metric tons of wheat and vegetable seed** to **550,000 farmers in all 34 provinces**. This counter-narcotics effort successfully reached 97% of its target beneficiaries and included anti-poppy messages.
- Rapid implementation of the cash for work program generated **4.4 million work days of paid labor** and resulted in **nearly \$16 million in wages paid to 194,000 farmers**.
- Over **3,750 women in 13 districts benefited from household income generating activities** in Nangarhar province. Projects focus on handicrafts, embroidery, tailoring, small-scale agricultural processing and training to develop agricultural skills.

PROGRESS FOR FARMERS IN KANDAHAR

Kandahar, along with Helmand, is one of the highest poppy-producing provinces in Afghanistan. USAID remains concentrated on alternative livelihood efforts in this region as well and is seeing results with improvements in irrigation, road construction, and diversification of crops.

Irrigation. USAID rehabilitated approximately 1,000 km of canals in Kandahar and Helmand resulting in improved irrigation to nearly 43,000 hectares of land. Whereas poppy production is possible in areas without irrigation, high value agriculture requires water. An increase in grape production in the south reflects greater availability of water.

Road Projects. The rehabilitated Kandahar–Tirin Kot road links Kandahar and Uruzgan's provincial capitals providing greater access to markets for farmers. In addition to regional markets, USAID facilitated the export of 200 metric tons of raisins, partly from Kandahar, to buyers in Russia and Ukraine and plans to export a total of 1,000 metric tons to these buyers.

Crop Diversification. In addition to grapes, USAID facilitated the export of 66 metric tons of fresh pomegranates to Singapore, with an additional 33 metric tons in cold storage ready for export. The construction of five cold storage units, with another three under construction in the south, enables farmers to maintain fresh produce for export. The improved quality due to cold storage resulted in the Fresh Fruit Exporter's Association of Kandahar and other Afghan associations and entrepreneurs to export over 50 metric tons of fresh grapes to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, India, and the United Arab Emirates.

Improved Processing and Marketing. USAID is working with associations to train farmers and investors in fruit and nut processing. USAID is building and equipping processing plants such as a fresh fruit plant that is now utilized by the Fresh Fruit Exporters' Association of Kandahar. Also the Dried Fruit Exporter's Association of Kandahar will benefit from the construction of a dried fruit and nut processing plant. An almond processing line, will be installed soon to allow the production of high quality nuts suitable for worldwide export.